Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Southwest Oregon

8/3/2013

Subject: **This advisory is the second issued for Southwest Oregon and has been updated to reflect ongoing conditions**. The persistent dry weather is forecasted to continue as hot and dry weather returns to southwest Oregon. Ongoing fires have validated the need to inform Land and Fire Managers as well as firefighting resources of the severity of fire behavior influencing strategies and tactics.

Discussion: Above normal temperature and below normal precipitation since the beginning of the year has accelerated the conditioning (drying) of fuels. Dead fuels are at values that are critical and will burn more regularly and with greater intensity. Live fuels are drought stressed and will contribute to fire spread exhibiting high resistance to control. **The fire environment will continue to be conducive to enhance and support large fire growth**.

Difference from normal conditions: Reports from the field indicate conditions in many areas are about two to four weeks ahead of schedule; 100 hr fuels are averaging 7-8% where normal values are typically 12%. 1000 hr fuels range from 9% to13% (critical values are13% and typically are not reached until mid-August). Many areas in SW Oregon are less than 50% average precipitation since January 1, the Siskiyou Mountains less than 25%**. Dry conditions are forecasted to persist or intensify in the coming weeks**, be mindful that the driest and hottest conditions typically occur mid to late August.

Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

Expect a greater degree of resistance to control, direct attack on the flanks may not be a viable option. . Aviation assets may be needed to support flanking attack.

Fire intensity may be too great earlier in the burn period and may extend into the evening hours.

Watch for roll out on steep slopes this can result in short upslope runs and lead to strong head fire development even with only modest winds.

Pay close attention to changing conditions to include; fuel transition, slope change or reversal, aspect change and time of day**.**

Smoke impacts reduce visibility to travel corridors and potentially limit suppression efforts. Prolonged exposure to smoke is hazardous and limiting exposure may be necessary as the fire season is expected to persist.

Mitigation Measures:

Indirect strategies may need to be identified and communicated early. Be cautious when going direct, ensure support is on site and readily available, reassess if resources are not available.

Anticipate slower production rates, additional resources may be needed to meet operational objectives.

Identify a solid anchor point and utilize flanking or pincer tactics. Do not over extend resource coverage “hold what can be held”. Remember the greatest Value at Risk is the resources on scene!!!

Continually evaluate escape routes and safety zones. What was identified as a safety zone early in the shift may no longer be valid. Early recognition of escape to safety is imperative. Post lookouts that can assist with early warning.

Maintaining Situational Awareness is essential **- Understand the implications of change**, light flashy fuels will accelerate and burn quickly, larger fuels will slow spread but increase intensity. Be mindful of slope change, what was a backing fire could rapidly become a head fire. South and west aspects will be more active earlier in the burn period.